

## All About

### Learn Greek Pronunciation

A large, thick blue circular arc that forms the left side of a circle, framing the number 4.

4

A large, thick blue circular arc that forms the right side of a circle, framing the text 'Grammar Points' and the number 2.

Grammar Points

2

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## Grammar Points

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### **The Focus of This Lesson Is Basic Greek Pronunciation.**

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A good foundation in pronunciation is important to learning Greek. One of the best ways to get Greek pronunciation down pat is to listen and repeat, then listen and repeat again. Just like that annoying song you can't get out of your head, one day Greek will get stuck in your head, and you'll be set for life.

### **Greek Uses Indo-European Phonetics**

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The Greek alphabet consists of twenty-four characters and has a basic system of a consonant followed by a vowel. However, in Greek, six two-letter consonant combinations form one individual sound. We will mention them later in this lesson.

### **Greek Vowels and Consonants**

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The Greek alphabet has seven vowels and seventeen consonants that, unlike English, we pronounce differently when we read them by themselves from when we read them as part of a word. For example, the vowels are: *Álfa* (α), *Épsilon* (ε), *Ítta* (η), *Gióta* (ι), *Ómikron* (ο), *Ýpsilon* (υ), and *Oméga* (ω). It's important to know this reading of the alphabet as we read many letters the same way when they appear in words. When we read these letters in words, we should read them as follows:

1. α sounds like "a" in "a" or "an"
2. ε sounds like "e" in "electricity"
3. η sounds like "i" in "information"
4. ι sounds like "i" in "information"
5. ο sounds like "o" in "organ"
6. ω sounds like "o" in "organ"
7. υ sounds like "i" in "information"

In this chapter, we're not going to go over the pronunciation of all the

consonants, but if you're interested, you can listen to our pronunciation series designed to help you master Greek pronunciation. Instead, we're going to discuss some of the interesting aspects of pronunciation.

## Stress

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The first thing that needs mentioning is that in Greek, we use an accent mark over a letter to indicate which syllable we should stress in a word. A word can have the same spelling as other words, but depending on where the accent is, its meaning changes.

## Consonant Groups

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In Greek, we group the consonants depending on where and how we pronounce them. There are five groups of consonants:

1. Labial consonants, *p* (π), *v* (β), and *f* (φ), are those consonants you articulate with both lips or while biting down on your lower lip.
2. Dental consonants, *t* (τ), *d* (δ), and *th* (θ), are the consonants you articulate by pressing your tongue against your upper teeth.
3. Palatal consonants, *k* (κ), *g* (γ), and *ch* (χ), are consonants you form with the body of your tongue raised against your palate.
4. Nasal consonants, *n* (ν) and *m* (μ), are consonants you produce by softly pressing your tongue against the palate and allowing air to flow through your nose.
5. Liquid consonants, *l* (λ) and *r* (ρ), are trills, taps, or approximant consonants that we do not classify as semivowels because they do not correspond phonetically to specific vowels (in English, "yes" corresponds to [i]).

## Greek's Omission of Common Sounds from Other Languages

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There are sounds common in other languages that do not exist in Greek. These include sounds such as [sh] as in "**sh**op," [Z] as in "plea**sure**," [ch] as in "**ch**urch," and [dZ] as in "**j**ob." So what do Greeks do when they want to pronounce foreign words with these sounds? If they are not trained to pronounce these sounds correctly, they simply transform these sounds to their corresponding ones: [sh][s], [Z][z], [ch][ts], and [dZ][dz].

The Greek language forms many sounds mainly by combining a vowel with a consonant; however, the language also has independent sounds formed by two-letter consonants. We write sounds such as [b], [d], and [g] that are not allocated a letter in the alphabet as two-letter combinations. We call these two-letter consonants, as we previously mentioned. For example, we write [b] as *mi + pi* (μπ), [d] as *ni + taf* (ντ), and [g] as *gámma + káppa* (γκ) or as double *gámma* (γγ).

Some say that the sounds [b], [d], and [g] used to exist in classical Greek. Later, probably sometime after the New Testament was written in the so-called *koine* ("common") Greek, these three sounds had shifted in pronunciation to the corresponding "soft" ones, [v], [th], and [gh]. This left a void in the phonological space.

## References

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There are piles and piles written about Greek pronunciation, but here are a few references to help you on your way:

1. [www.greek-language.gr](http://www.greek-language.gr)
2. [www.media.noa.gr/language/grammar/](http://www.media.noa.gr/language/grammar/)
3. [www.scribd.com/doc/8735012/-Greek-Grammar](http://www.scribd.com/doc/8735012/-Greek-Grammar)

One of the best ways to get Greek pronunciation down pat is to listen and repeat, then listen and repeat again, which is something you can do at GreekPod101.com. We have audio files of native speakers and even a voice recorder for you to see how you sound in comparison.